

**Contact Deb:**

340 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
360-786-7976

Local 17th District #:
256-0689

Toll-free hotline:
1-800-562-6000

Hearing-impaired hotline:
1-800-635-9993

**Leadership and
Committees:**

Assistant Majority Whip
Member, Transportation
Member, State Government
Member, Technology, Tele-
communications & Energy
Member, Joint Legislative
Audit and Review
Member, Legislative Transpor-
tation Committee, Aviation
and Statewide Planning Sub-
committees
Alternate delegate, Pacific
NorthWest Economic Region

Making a Difference in State Government

Representative

Deb Wallace

17th District**Winter 2004**

Dear 17th District Neighbor:

The 2004 session is in full swing. I'm pleased to share this overview of some key issues that will be addressed this session.

I have attended many neighborhood and community meetings across the 17th District during the last year. Citizens have shared with me their concerns for a strong economy built on dependable jobs, quality schools, and affordable health care. I will use this foundation as a guide to examine every subject that comes before us in Olympia.

As always, please stay in touch with me. Your phone calls, letters and e-mails concerning these and other topics are very important in my work to represent you and other citizens. I look forward to reading and hearing your perspectives! Also, please don't hesitate to use the enclosed comment section to let me know what you think.

Sincerely yours,

Deb Wallace
State Representative
17th Legislative District

Town Hall Meeting:

**You are invited to a Town Hall meet-
ing on Saturday, February 21!
Please set that day aside on your
calendar. We'll get started at 10
a.m. in the Wy-East Middle School
auditorium. The school is located at
1112 S.E. 136th Ave. in Vancouver.**

**Please stop by and let me know
what's on your mind.**

Economy:

Our communities need dependable, long-lasting jobs

Thousands of Washingtonians have invested a big part of their lives making our communities better places to call home. They helped build our towns and neighborhoods — and now they've retired from the work force after their jobs well-done. **Many young Washington citizens are also not part of the current work force.**

However, the economic foundation that we all build — and that we all continue improving — is an everyday concern for every family. Our economy touches not just those of us in today's work force, but anyone else who puts down roots in the Evergreen State.

Competitiveness Council reports

The Washington Competitiveness Council recently announced a second series of recommendations for building stronger jobs and businesses.

Business, labor, civic, education, and other community leaders are suggesting that our state focus on improvements in public schools and colleges.

The council and similar sources have advised the Legislature to consider several directions this year, such as:

- **Strengthening educational opportunities for children who need the most help.**
- **Bracing policies that provide a reliable and reasonably priced energy supply.**
- **Increasing access to our colleges and universities.**
- **Emphasizing work-force training and retraining in our higher education system.**
- **Augmenting support, including tax incentives, for research-and-development activities.**
- **Continuing work on transportation-system improvements that we launched in last year's legislative session.**

Renewing incentives for research-and-development work, for instance, can be particularly significant for the semiconductor industry and other high-technology businesses — especially in Southwest Washington.

I am also working on the development of a regional-funding authority for continuing transportation improvements. Building a world-class transportation system, as I noted, was the foremost course of action suggested in the council's first round of recommendations.

Schools:

Education is a heritage that we leave for our children

Talk about frustrating!

In more than a few recent elections, communities have captured a clear majority of votes for school-levy and bond issues. But they've seen their education measures come up short because vote totals fell below the 60-percent "super-majority" support required in current Washington law.

We passed legislation in the House last year to make our school-levy law a genuine democracy. Unfortunately, the Senate refused even to vote on the bill that we'd endorsed by a 73-25 margin in the House. We will consider the issue again in the 2004 session.

Terms of the proposal direct that a "simple majority" of 50 percent plus one vote — rather than the current 60 percent — of people voting in a school-levy election would be needed to pass the levy. The legislation would send a proposed state-constitutional amendment to the ballot this coming November.



Last year in Clark County, the Battle Ground School District and its supporters suffered what must have seemed like an eternity of levy limbo.

A handful of votes separated the Battle Ground schools from victory on election day when the district's levy captured 6,955 "Yes" votes against a mere 4,767 "No" votes. *But that 59.33-percent margin wasn't going to be enough to pass the measure.* Luckily for the district, the "Yes" total later made its way over the 60-percent mark.

Making a Difference in State Government

Health care:

Families have every right to receive affordable health care

Last session, we acted on prescription-drug reform to make sure our citizens can receive the medicines they need — at the right time and for the right price.

Too many citizens have to make a devastating choice: Either buy the drug their doctor says they need — or put a good meal on the table. **The bill we passed gives the state a good start to reduce the cost of prescription drugs.**

This session, we'll continue working toward the goal of making sure every citizen has access to basic health care. One issue that will see a lot of attention involves the medical-liability system.

Make no mistake: This discussion touches most every segment of our society — individual citizens, as well as businesses and other organizations.

We will examine proposals aimed at assuring health care for all communities.

Any approach to the present system in the liability-insurance market must be comprehensive. Specifically, we must look at methods for resolving disagreements between consumers and providers *without resorting to lawsuits* — through mediation and arbitration, for example.

Long-term-care policies

I held a long-term-care forum early in December. The forum provided information for people who are either facing these matters today — or preparing to face in the future.

Long-term-care issues are high on my agenda for the 2004 Legislative Session. I believe our state needs long-term-care policies that make sense for the 21st century.

Right now, our state is in the middle of a 20-year effort to build a community-based, long-term-care system. We're looking at a system that respects the desire of many elderly and disabled citizens to live in their own home.





Please
place
stamp
here



**Representative
Deb Wallace**

340 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Outreach:

I always want to know what you think about legislative issues

No two words tell the story of our American democracy better than these two: *citizen participation*.

That's why I need your comments — and that's why I've held eight public forums in schools and other facilities around our community.

Our 17th Legislative District includes East Vancouver, Brush Prairie, Hockinson, and communities south of Battle Ground. My goal is to have a meeting in every one of our neighborhoods! Talking with one another — and listening to one another — is the surest way to make the kind of improvements we need for our neighborhoods, for our communities, and for our state.

Please let me know if your neighborhood, community, or business group would like me to come talk with you — and listen to you!

Call Deb at 360-256-0689

Department of Printing
Washington State
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
STANDARD
PRESORTED

**Making a Difference in State
Government**

340 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

**Representative
Deb Wallace**



Keep in touch!

I want to read your comments on things discussed in this newsletter, as well as other subjects you care about. Use this space to jot down a message. When you're finished, just write your name and mailing address (and e-mail address) on this card, stamp it, and drop it in the mail. And thanks again — in advance!

Dear Deb: _____

Sincerely, _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____